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NEWS RELEASE

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California Dreamin' on Such a Winter's Day
by Senator Larry Craig

"I'd be safe and warm, if I was in L.A.", or so the song goes. But this time of the year in Idaho, and in Los Angeles too, when we're speaking of warming, we're talking about putting another log in the fireplace. In Washington, D.C., it is global warming that is the hot topic of the political season, especially as the political climate has changed to put two Members of Congress from California in charge of the our nation's energy policy in both the House and the Senate.

Our new Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi has already formed a new "select committee on climate change" to sidestep the non-Californians in her party. Unimpressed, the sidestepped House Energy Committee Chairman, John Dingell, says the select committee will be "as useful as feathers on a fish."

In the Senate, Senator Barbara Boxer has plans to lead a "sea change" on climate change in the Environment and Public Works (EPW) Committee that she now chairs. Both congresswomen subscribe to a punitive approach when it comes to energy policy supply, and that applies to anyone who doesn't subscribe to their point of view –specifically when it comes to defining "clean" energy.

Their definition of renewable energy includes less than two percent of our current electricity generation, and most certainly does not include the 30 percent of our power that comes from emission-free nuclear and hydroelectric power. I find this troubling.

Idahoans understand that affordable electricity can be produced without producing greenhouse gasses; nearly all the power produced in our state is from hydroelectric, wind, or geothermal power. The Pacific Northwest has the lowest electric power rates, and we produce the smallest amount of greenhouse gasses of any region in the country, thanks to the conservation measures we championed in the Northwest Power Act, all the way back in 1980. There is a lot that the rest of country – not just California – can learn from following our lead.

I have been asked many times if I watched Al Gore's movie, and I have not. But I have been to his website, and I think he has done an outstanding job in communicating the importance of individuals taking responsibility for conserving and reducing their consumption and increasing efficiency. Being a thrifty conservationist myself, I believe that it is important to spread ideas throughout the public on how we all can reduce the overall demand for energy, thereby reducing prices and putting a little more money in our pocketbooks at the end of the day.

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Efficiency is just the first step. Beyond Mr. Gore’s efficiency tips, I had trouble finding any other solutions for how to produce the enormous amounts of energy that we will need to keep our economy competitive. The only policy I could find on the website was support for a punitive legislative proposal that received only 43 votes in the U.S. Senate in 2003.

When that same command-and-control legislation was reintroduced in 2005 by Senators McCain and Lieberman as an amendment to the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (EPACT), it received five fewer votes than it did the first time, falling 38 to 60. Sen. Boxer voted against the bill the second time because it included a proposal she found too extreme: nuclear power.

As a co-author of the climate change amendment that was included in EPACT, I am proud to say that this legislation played a major role in putting more than 30 new nuclear power plants on the drawing board since it passed. Very soon, we will build the first commercial cellulosic ethanol plant and the first next generation nuclear plant here in Idaho. I look forward to continuing my roles as a watchdog for alarmist policies and a leader in the formation of energy policies that ideally will look a lot like Idaho, and much less like California.